Probe Sought in 'Media Manipulation' by FBI

7/5/78

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Two congressional subcommittees have been asked to investigate FBI "manipulation of the media" as part of the groundwork for domestic intelligence charter legislation.

Citing the bureau's apparent use of an unwitting radio newsman in the 1973 American Indian occupation of Wounded Knee, S.D., the Center for National Security Studies asked for an inquiry in separate letters to Sen. James Abourezk (D-S.D.) and Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.).

"This dangerous interference by the FBI with the legitimate collection of news is clearly a violation of the right of freedom of the press as guaranteed by the First Amendment," the center's director, Morton H. Halperin, said of the Wounded Knee incident.

Abourezk is chairman of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on administrative practice and procedure, and Edwards is chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on civil and constitutional rights. Both subcommittees, Halperin submitted, should look into the Wounded Knee episode "and other possible instances of the FBI's manipulation of the media" in connection with the two panels' consideration of legislation to govern domestic intelligence-gathering.

The Wounded Knee episode came to light in portions of a memo obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the Seattle Coalition to Stop Government Spying.

The memo, dated March 16, 1973, and sent from the Seattle FBI office to Minneapolis, alluded to a forthcoming return assignment to Wounded Knee for Clarence McDaniel, a radio reporter for station KIXI in Seattle.

According to the memo, McDaniel, who was highly trusted by the Indians at Wounded Knee, was expected "to continue furnishing complete coverage" to KIXI and was "unaware that his stories are not being publicized in full or that the intelligence information and his tapes are being furnished the FBI.

". . . If any specific information is needed by FBI, KIXI willing to pass on request as normal duty assignment with no reference to FBI," the memo added.

McDaniel said he was unaware of this until recently. "It's kind of ridiculous really," he said. "The Indians wanted to get their story out. . . . There was no reason for this 'I Spy' business."

The arrangement with the FBI was reportedly made by then KIXI news director Ken Stuart, now retired, who has said publicly that he did it on his own "because I thought it was right at the time." KIXI's general manager, Gil Jacobsen, said the KIXI "management" was also in the dark and "we resent any implication that KIXI or anybody else has done anything wrong."

"KIXI management did not make any arrangements with the FBI," Jacobsen continued. Asked if Stuart was not a member of management when he was news director, Jacobsen insisted, "In the strictest sense of the word, no."